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EUR/PD/PA, AF/E, AF/W, AF/S, DRL/IRF

FROM EMBASSY VATICAN/MESSAGE NO. 48/01

E.O. 12958: N/A

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SUBJECT: VATICAN - "VIEWS FROM THE HILL"

[11.](#) (U) THE MARCH 17 - 23 EDITION OF NEWS AND VIEWS FROM VATICAN CITY.

CONTENTS:

- SOUTH KOREAN ARCHBISHOP LIKES POTUS RECIPE FOR KOREA
- VATICAN OFFICIAL CONFIRMS PAPAL VISIT TO ATHENS
- PAPAL SUPPORT FOR ARAB CHRISTIANS
- VATICAN ADMITS NUNS SEXUALLY ABUSED BY PRIESTS

SOUTH KOREAN ARCHBISHOP LIKES BUSH POLICY ON KOREA

[12.](#) (U) SEOUL'S CATHOLIC ARCHBISHOP NICHOLAS CHEONG JIN-SUK HAS DECLARED PRESIDENT BUSH'S POLICIES TOWARDS NORTH KOREA "VERY PRUDENT." IN A VATICAN CITY INTERVIEW WITH MISSIONARY NEWS AGENCY "FIDES," THE ARCHBISHOP WAS ASKED WHETHER THE BUSH ADMINISTRATION'S POLICIES WOULD HAMPER NORTH/SOUTH KOREA CONTACT. CHEONG REPLIED, "THE AMERICAN PRESIDENT'S POLICIES DO NOT AFFECT OUR (THE CATHOLIC CHURCH) WORK. OUR PRESIDENT, KIM DAE-JUNG IS, PERHAPS, A LITTLE OVER ENTHUSIASTIC. PRESIDENT BUSH IS VERY PRUDENT." WHEN ASKED
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ABOUT RUMORS THAT HE HAD BEEN INVITED TO TRAVEL TO PYONGYANG TO PREPARE FOR AN EVENTUAL PAPAL VISIT, THE ARCHBISHOP AFFIRMED THAT HE HAD RECEIVED A VERBAL INVITATION ONLY. (NOTE: ARCHBISHOP CHEONG IS RESPONSIBLE FOR THE ECCLESIASTICAL ADMINISTRATION OF PYONGYANG IN THE ABSENCE OF A NORTH KOREAN CATHOLIC HIERARCHY. END NOTE).

POPE TO TRAVEL TO ATHENS IN MAY

[13.](#) (U) POPE JOHN PAUL II WILL MAKE A PILGRIMAGE TO ATHENS, GREECE ON MAY 4 AND 5. VATICAN SUBSTITUTE SECRETARY OF STATE (INTERIOR MINISTER EQUIVALENT) ARCHBISHOP LEONARDO SANDRI ANNOUNCED THE DATES AFTER A MARCH 20 MEETING IN ATHENS WITH THE HEAD OF THE GREEK ORTHODOX CHURCH THERE. THE POPE'S STOP IN THE GREEK CAPITAL WILL BE THE FIRST ON A PILGRIMAGE THAT WILL ALSO TAKE HIM TO DAMASCUS, SYRIA AND MALTA. THE TENTATIVE SCHEDULE FOR ATHENS CALLS FOR THE POPE TO BE GREETED AT THE AIRPORT BY STATE AND ORTHODOX CHURCH AUTHORITIES. HE WILL MAKE A VISIT TO THE SITE OF THE ANCIENT AREOPAGUS, WHERE SAINT PAUL WAS SUPPOSED TO HAVE PREACHED TO THE ATHENIANS, AND THEN MEET ORTHODOX LEADER ARCHBISHOP CHRISTODOLOS AND GREECE'S PRESIDENT STEPHANOPOULOS.

PAPAL WORDS OF ENCOURAGEMENT FOR ARAB CHRISTIANS: MEPP

[14.](#) (U) POPE JOHN PAUL II HAS CALLED FOR AN IMMEDIATE RESUMPTION OF NEGOTIATIONS BETWEEN PALESTINIAN AND ARAB LEADERS. AS HE MET WITH A GROUP OF BISHOPS FROM ARAB
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COUNTRIES, THE PONTIFF SAID THE "TRAGIC" EVENTS OF RECENT DAYS HAD "TESTED" HIS HOPES FOR PEACE IN THE REGION. HE URGED THE BISHOPS TO DO ALL THEY CAN TO KEEP CATHOLICS FROM LEAVING THE REGION. HE PARTICULARLY STRESSED THE IMPORTANCE OF MAINTAINING A CHRISTIAN PRESENCE IN JERUSALEM AND DESCRIBED DIALOGUE WITH JEWS AND MOSLEMS AS AN URGENT AND NECESSARY TASK. IN HIS CONCLUDING REMARKS, THE POPE MENTIONED SO-CALLED TRAGIC SITUATIONS IN SEVERAL COUNTRIES IN THE REGION INCLUDING IRAQ WHERE "THE EMBARGO CONTINUES TO CLAIM VICTIMS." HE SAID TOO MANY INNOCENT PEOPLE WERE PAYING THE CONSEQUENCES FOR AN "ILL-FATED" WAR, WHOSE EFFECTS CONTINUE TO FALL ON THE WEAKEST AND THE DEFENSELESS. THE POPE ALSO CALLED ON ARAB STATES IN NORTH AFRICA TO SHOW HOSPITALITY TOWARD REFUGEES FLEEING THE CIVIL WAR AND FAMINE

IN SUDAN.

VATICAN ACKNOWLEDGES SEXUAL ABUSE BY PRIESTS

15. (SBU) IN A RARE STATEMENT ACKNOWLEDGING FAULT, VATICAN SPOKESMAN JOAQUIN NAVARRO-VALLS SAID MARCH 20 THAT THERE WAS A PROBLEM OF SEXUAL ABUSE OF NUNS BY PRIESTS IN SOME MISSIONARY TERRITORIES. HE SAID THE VATICAN WAS WORKING TO CORRECT THE SITUATION. THE STATEMENT WAS IN RESPONSE TO A MARCH 16 ARTICLE IN U.S. CATHOLIC WEEKLY, NATIONAL CATHOLIC REPORTER THAT CITED FOUR REPORTS BY SENIOR MEMBERS OF WOMEN'S RELIGIOUS ORDERS ASSERTING THAT SEXUAL ABUSE OF NUNS BY PRIESTS, INCLUDING RAPE, WAS A SERIOUS PROBLEM,

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	DODE-00	DOEE-00	DS-00	EAP-00	FBIE-00	UTED-00	VC-00
	H-01	TEDE-00	INR-00	IO-00	L-00	VCE-00	M-00
	AC-01	NEA-00	NSAE-00	OCS-03	OES-01	OIC-02	PA-00
	PM-00	ACE-00	P-00	SCT-00	SP-00	IRM-00	SSO-00
	SS-00	TEST-00	T-00	USIE-00	R-00	SNIS-00	NISC-00
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ESPECIALLY IN AFRICA. ONE OF THE AUTHORS TOLD A VATICAN CITY NEWS AGENCY THAT SHE WAS VERY PLEASED THE VATICAN HAD ISSUED ITS ACKNOWLEDGEMENT. (COMMENT: THE VATICAN HAS BECOME INCREASINGLY SENSITIZED TO INCIDENTS OF SEXUAL ABUSE BY CLERGY, PARTICULARLY IN COUNTRIES LIKE THE US, AUSTRALIA AND ENGLAND. WE EXPECT THE REPORTS OF SEXUAL ABUSE BY PRIESTS IN MISSIONARY TERRITORIES TO BE TAKEN SERIOUSLY AND DEALT WITH PROFESSIONALLY. END COMMENT). MERANTE

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